United Nations S/PV.6562

Security Council

Sixty-sixth year

6562nd meeting

Thursday, 23 June 2011, 10 a.m.

New York

Provisional

President:	Mr. Messone	(Gabon)
Members:	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Mr. Barbalić
	Brazil	Mrs. Viotti
	China	Mr. Wang Min
	Colombia	Mr. Osorio
	France	Mr. Araud
	Germany	Mr. Wittig
	India	Mr. Vinay Kumar
	Lebanon	Mr. Salam
	Nigeria	Mr. Amieyeofori
	Portugal	Mr. Moraes Cabral
	Russian Federation	Mr. Pankin
	South Africa	Mr. Sangqu
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Mark Lyall Grant
	United States of America	Ms. Rice

Agenda

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in the Middle East, including the Palestinian question

The President (*spoke in French*): Under rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Lynn Pascoe, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs, to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I now give the floor to Mr. Pascoe.

Mr. Pascoe: Since we have tried to brief the Security Council regularly on the situations in Libya, Syria, Yemen and Bahrain, I will limit today's briefing to its traditional topics.

As popular protest and political change continue to sweep the region, the Israeli-Palestinian political process remains at a dangerous standstill. The Secretary-General is increasingly worried about the impasse. The resumption of meaningful negotiations is urgent.

In that context, the Secretary-General hopes that both parties will demonstrate a renewed determination to achieve a peace agreement that provides for two States living side by side in dignity, security and peace, consistent with long-established and recognized parameters. He believes that President Obama, in his speech of 19 May, offered important ideas that could help the peace talks to move forward, consistent with international positions and responding to the legitimate core concerns of both parties. He encourages Prime Minister Netanyahu and President Abbas to respond positively to that important speech.

The Quartet agrees that moving forward on the basis of territory and security provides a foundation for Israelis and Palestinians to reach a final resolution of the conflict through serious and substantive negotiations and mutual agreement on all core issues. In a statement on 20 May, the Quartet reiterated its strong appeal to the parties to overcome the current obstacles and resume direct bilateral negotiations without delay or pre-conditions.

The Secretary-General strongly supports the convening of the Quartet at the principals level soon. The Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process and Personal Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Robert Serry, is in close contact with his fellow envoys in that regard, and with the parties. In addition, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of France, Mr. Alain Juppé, made proposals for resuming negotiations, and the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Baroness Catherine Ashton, visited the region to impress upon the parties the European Union's sense of urgency and concern.

During the reporting period, Fatah and Hamas leaders met under Egyptian auspices to discuss the implementation of the reconciliation agreement concluded in Cairo on 4 May. Factional representatives also met in Moscow and Ankara. On 24 May, the League of Arab States discussed ways to support the implementation of the Palestinian reconciliation agreement and to provide financial assistance to the Palestinians. President Abbas also held consultations in Saudi Arabia on 13 June. However, no agreement has yet been reached on the composition of the proposed Government.

We recall the Secretary-General's consistent support of efforts for Palestinian unity in line with resolutions 1850 (2008) and 1860 (2009). We wish to see unity in the framework of the positions of the Quartet and the commitments of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Arab Peace Initiative. We urge the parties to implement their agreement accordingly. It is vital that, until elections are held, any Government be committed to the programme of President Abbas and maintain security cooperation in the West Bank and calm in Gaza.

Security cooperation between the Palestinian Authority and Israel in the West Bank continues, and must be maintained. I welcome the announcement that an eighth battalion of Palestinian security forces will be trained in Jordan with international assistance, bringing the number of internationally trained Palestinian security forces maintaining law and order in the West Bank to around 4,000.

We count on Israel's continued cooperation in keeping up regular transfers of value added tax and

Those transfers help to ensure the payment of salaries for essential State functions, including security. It is also critical that donors commit additional funds to support the Palestinian Authority's recurrent budgetary expenditures, given its projected budget gap of approximately $300 million for the year.

We will continue to work towards the full implementation of all aspects of resolution 1860 (2009) regarding Gaza. An overall state of calm between Israel and Gaza has generally prevailed for the past 10 weeks. However, during the reporting period, two rockets and two mortars were fired at Israel from Gaza, fortunately causing no injuries or damage, while Israel conducted six incursions and one air strike. One Palestinian civilian was killed by Israeli fire on 21 May while approaching the border fence during the night, and two civilians were injured by Israeli forces on 20 and 29 May, respectively. We continue to urge calm and restraint for the sake of the civilian populations on both sides.

On 16 June, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) summer games were launched in Gaza, providing thousands of children with recreational and learning activities. We welcome Israel's approval, earlier this week, of a further $100 million in UNRWA construction projects, in particular 1,100 UNRWA housing units in Khan Younis and Rafah and a further 18 UNRWA schools, bringing the total of approved United Nations reconstruction over the past 15 months to approximately $265 million. We continue to stress that the market in aggregate, steel bar and cement can and should be liberalized by the Israeli authorities.

On 25 May, Egypt announced extended working hours and eased crossing procedures for persons at the Rafah crossing point between Gaza and Egypt, subject to security checks. Difficulties have surfaced between Egypt and the de facto Hamas authorities in the implementation of that adjustment. Efforts continue to combat the smuggling of weapons through tunnels.

In relation to reports that a new flotilla is planned in the next few days, I want to reiterate today the strong view of the United Nations that assistance for the population of Gaza should be delivered through official crossings. The Secretary-General has called upon, and written letters to, Governments concerned to must act responsibly and with caution to avoid any violent incidents.

On 25 June, Israeli Staff Sergeant Gilad Shalit will have spent five years in Hamas captivity. We urge humanitarian access to him and his immediate release, and hope that prisoner-exchange efforts will bear fruit. This would impact favourably on the situation of several thousand Palestinian prisoners in Israel and on the broader political atmosphere. The Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process uses its contacts with all parties to support efforts in this regard.

Israeli settlement activity continued in violation of international law and the Road Map. According to the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics, construction was under way on 1,774 units in the first quarter of 2011 in the West Bank, excluding East Jerusalem. The Ministry of Defence approved an additional 294 units in the settlement of Beitar Illit during the reporting period. Settlement activity is continuing in East Jerusalem as well. I note with concern the conduct of a dedication ceremony at the settlement of Ma'aleh Zeitim, in the heart of the Palestinian East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Ras Al-Amud, in the presence of the Knesset Speaker and senior Cabinet members.

We are concerned that continued demolitions in Area C are displacing Palestinians from their communities. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) demolished 81 Palestinian structures in the West Bank, including two in East Jerusalem, displacing 260 people, including 145 children. This included the demolition of 29 structures in Al-Hadidiya and in the northern Jordan Valley on 21 June. The planning regime applied by the Israeli authorities in this area prohibits residents from constructing any structures in their community.

On 5 June, large crowds of demonstrators in two locations in the Golan attempted to breach the ceasefire line and cross the technical fence. This incident has been reported by the Secretary-General in his current report (S/2011/359) on the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), and Assistant-Secretary General Edmond Mulet will brief the Council after this meeting. The IDF first responded with verbal warnings through a loudspeaker, the use of tear gas and warning shots above the crowd. It then

killed and many more wounded. UNDOF helped calm the situation and is seeking to confirm the facts.

The Secretary-General, who had sent appeals for calm, responsibility and restraint to all parties throughout the region, regretted the loss of life and condemned the use of violence and all actions intended to provoke violence. He called for maximum restraint on all sides and strict observance of international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians, while reminding the Syrian authorities of their obligation to protect UNDOF personnel and facilities.

Riots took place the following day in the Yarmouk Palestinian refugee camp in Syria during funerals for those killed, apparently in frustration against Palestinian factions based in Syria that had encouraged the breach attempt, resulting in a reported 12 killed.

There were no demonstrations along the Blue Line on 5 June during the so-called An-Naksa day events. Following the confrontation on 15 May, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon discussed measures to prevent further incidents with the parties. On 2 June, the Lebanese Armed Forces decided to strictly forbid demonstrators from entering the area south of the Litani River and to impose strict security measures along certain portions of the Blue Line. Following this decision, Palestinian organizations cancelled protests along the Blue Line and opted instead to hold a day-long sit-in in refugee camps.

Demonstrations in the West Bank resulted in approximately 120 Palestinians and one Israeli soldier injured, and 15 Palestinians arrested by the IDF. In other demonstrations during the reporting period, violent clashes between anti-barrier protestors and Israeli security forces resulted in 95 Palestinians injured and numerous arrests and cases of gas inhalation. The IDF conducted 386 search operations in the occupied West Bank, in which 139 Palestinians were injured and 329 arrested, among them three members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, from the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and Hamas, and two Fatah leaders, while 25 Israeli security officers were also injured.

Israeli settler attacks against Palestinians and their property in the West Bank resulted in 13 Palestinian injuries and extensive material damage, Palestinian-controlled religious site. In response to the IDF's dismantling of a settlement outpost on 2 June near the Shiloh settlement, settlers attacked Palestinians and their property under the so-called price-tag policy. A mosque in the village of Al-Mughayar was set on fire and its outside walls were sprayed with graffiti on 7 June. The Israeli Government condemned this attack. The Special Coordinator condemned the desecration and called on the Israeli Government to ensure the accountability of those responsible and to protect the human rights of Palestinians and their property, including religious sites.

Please allow me to turn to the situation in Lebanon. On 13 June, Prime Minister Mikati announced the formation of a new Government, which in large part is composed of the 8 March coalition. According to the Lebanese Constitution, the new Government must present its programme to Parliament and gain its confidence within 30 days. Let me be clear: the Secretary-General expects the new Government to reiterate its commitment to the full implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) and to all of Lebanon's international obligations.

On 18 June, armed clashes between the predominantly Sunni neighbourhood of Bab al-Tabbaneh and the predominantly Alawite neighbourhood of Jabal Mohsen, in the northern city of Tripoli, left six people dead and 22 others injured. The clashes erupted after demonstrations in support of anti-regime protests in Syria.

The United Nations continues to monitor developments along Lebanon's northern border. The influx of Syrian nationals into northern Lebanon, which reached an estimated 4,000 persons in mid-May, has virtually stopped since early June. This is attributed to the imposition by Syrian authorities of additional security measures along the border. The United Nations is coordinating closely with the Government of Lebanon on the provision of assistance to the displaced and on matters of protection and the determination of their status.

The situation faced by Palestinian refugees living in Lebanon continues to be a matter of concern. I urge donors to continue and, if possible, increase their support for regular UNRWA programmes aimed at

of the Nahr al-Bared camp in northern Lebanon, which was destroyed in 2007.

As the sixteenth report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of resolution 1701 (2006) is to be submitted soon, I will not elaborate today on the important developments in recent weeks that fall under the purview of that resolution.

In conclusion, with both the Palestinians and Israelis stressing their desire to negotiate, President Obama's speech contained ideas that the international community can rally behind to offer a framework to resume talks and seek an agreement. The Secretary-General looks forward to the Quartet giving impetus to this objective through a meeting at the principals level soon.

But what is most important is that the leaders on the ground rise to the challenge. They face political risks and there are many questions in the minds of their publics. There is also a gulf of confidence between the parties. But we appeal to them to return to negotiations in the interests of their respective peoples, without further delay, and to negotiate seriously in order to reach an agreement. We will continue to work with the parties and our regional and international partners in this cause.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Pascoe for his briefing.

I now invite Council members to informal consultations continue our discussion on the subject.

The meeting rose at 10.30 a.m